

AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS:

In the following Amendments, underlining indicates added text, while strikeout indicated deleted text.

1. (Cancelled)
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Currently Amended) A Gram-positive microorganism having a mutation or deletion of part or all of the gene encoding CP3, said mutation or deletion resulting in the inactivation of the CP3 proteolytic activity.
4. (Currently Amended) The Gram-positive microorganism of Claim 3, according to Claims 1, 2 or 3 that is a member of the family genus Bacillus.
5. (Currently Amended) The microorganism according to of Claim 4, wherein the member said member of the genus Bacillus is selected from the group consisting of *B. subtilis*, *B. licheniformis*, *B. lentus*, *B. brevis*, *B. stearothermophilus*, *B. alkalophilus*, *B. amyloliquefaciens*, *B. coagulans*, *B. circulans*, *B. lautus*, and *B. acillus thuringiensis*.
6. (Currently Amended) The microorganism of Claim 1, 2 or 3 wherein said microorganism is capable of expressing a heterologous protein.
7. (Currently Amended) The microorganism of Claim 6, wherein said heterologous protein is selected from the group consisting of hormones, enzymes, growth factors, and cytokines.
8. (Original) The microorganism of Claim 7, wherein said heterologous protein is an enzyme.
9. (Currently Amended) The microorganism of Claim 8, wherein said enzyme is selected from the group consisting of a proteases,

carbohydrases, and lipases; isomerases, such as racemases, epimerases, tautomerases, or mutases; transferases, kinases, and phosphatases.

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Currently Amended) A method for the production of a heterologous protein in a *Bacillus* host cell comprising the steps of

- (a) obtaining a *Bacillus* host cell comprising nucleic acid encoding said heterologous protein wherein said host cell contains a mutation or deletion in at least one of the genes encoding ~~cysteine protease 1, cysteine protease 2 and cysteine protease 3~~; and
- (b) growing said *Bacillus* host cell under conditions suitable for the expression of said heterologous protein.

14. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 13, wherein said *Bacillus* cell is selected from the group consisting of *Bacillus subtilis*, *B. licheniformis*, *B. lentus*, *B. brevis*, *B. stearothermophilus*, *B. alkalophilus*, *B. amyloliquefaciens*, *B. coagulans*, *B. circulans*, *B. lautus*, and *B. acillus thuringiensis*.

15. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 13, wherein said *Bacillus* *Bacillus* host cell further comprises a mutation or deletion in at least one of the genes encoding ~~Apr, Npr, Epr, Wpr and Mpr~~ *apr, npr, epr, wpr and mpr*.

16. (Currently Amended) A ~~gram~~-positive microorganism having a mutation or deletion in at least one of the genes encoding a cysteine protease selected from the group consisting of CP1, CP2 and CP3.

17. (Currently Amended) The microorganism of Claim 16, further comprising a mutation or deletion in at least one of the genes encoding ~~Apr, Npr, Epr, Wpr and Mpr~~ *apr, npr, epr, wpr and mpr*.